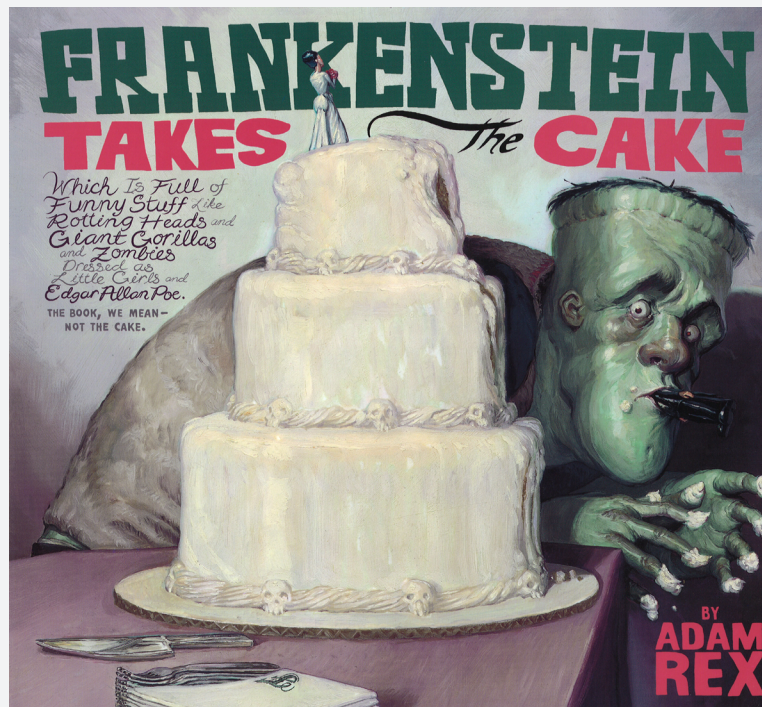


Second Reaction: Tea and Cake with Frankenstein

Rex, Adam. *Frankenstein Takes the Cake*. New York: Harcourt Children's Books, 2009.

LuAnn Lamie



Frankenstein Takes the Cake by Adam Rex is a wonderful choice for introducing poetry and art to students. Most of our students at Jefferson work on poetry books during the second semester of their freshman year. Few authors are also the illustrator, but Adam Rex has a sense of realism and whimsy that is very fun and interesting for upper elementary through adult readers.

The initial format of the book appears to be a children's book, but there is too much text. There are many references to history as well as art history. One page seems similar to an early Renaissance painting. The illustrations of Frankenstein and his bride are fabulous, the ink cartoons of Dracula and the ravens are whimsical, yet so animated. The collages of the author and the Pumpkin/Headless Horseman are funny but not as exciting as the other artwork, which is unfortunate, as this could be a great example for students to incorporate into their work. It will be a great book to share with students around Halloween or Edgar

Allen Poe's birthday! My favorite page is the Medusa turning her teacher and classmates to stone. With that said, the references to literature and history may cause some young readers to question, "What is the author talking about?" I know adults will just chuckle when they read the notes from the Ravens. I teach high school juniors and seniors. Here are a few of their thoughts on the art and book:

- "It's fun and entertaining but I believe this book was made for young adults. It would be hard for children to understand what is funny about it, though the illustrations are lovely." Kenia (Grade 12)
- "It was very funny and cleverly written but the humor and a lot of references the book makes little children wouldn't get. But overall, I really liked it!" Chelsea (Grade 12)
- "The writing/reading levels seemed to be middle school level. I think middle school Goth kids would love it! The art is perhaps a little dark. It is seasonal—perhaps Halloween and very silly! Kind of a mixed bag book..." Claire (Grade 12)
- "The story *Frankenstein Takes the Cake* is definitely for high school students because it has few, but still some, difficult words. It was a nice book. I like how you used references from older art pieces and poets. I think some of the story was misleading because of all the segments in the middle like "Off The Top Of My Head" but I was still able to follow the story line, but I would still consider that some kids that aren't the best at following story lines might have some problems, but other than that I enjoyed reading your book. The art work was amazing. I like how you worked some things into the picture such as the word in the fence, and the other little things you had to pay attention to see. Once again it was a good book I would recommend it to people." Corey (Grade 9)

Here are some thoughts from the adult readers:

- From an artist friend: "There is too much text! Definitely for older students. Very much like a graphic novel. Rich illustrations and the minimal use of collage."

- Gail Gripe, an English teacher from Jefferson—"This book is definitely for high school age and above. I loved the art work—especially the Frankenstein characters. The storyline of the Frankenstein wedding is humorous. The opening inside cover is very clever. The book seems disjointed, however, with the different segments—like 'off the top of my head' inserted between the storyline of Frankenstein. The 'Dracula Jr.' was too close to Peanuts. As an English teacher, the word 'plagiarism' came to mind. The poetry was OK."

As a wrap up, people really liked the art and the variety of techniques used to express the poetry. The writing and script were directed to older readers. I was interested in the plagiarism comment by one of my colleagues. The writing/art seemed to borderline copying an artists' cartoon. The "rule of thumb" when using someone else's work or photos is altering it at least 30 percent. Better yet . . . be creative and make your own art. I think Rex's illustrations and painting were rich and very interesting for young artists. The collage articles were weaker, which is too bad as that art technique would be a great resource for the poetry and art projects.

About the Author

LuAnn Lamie is an Art teacher at Lafayette Jefferson High School. She combines dance, literature and visual arts into her classroom curriculum, as well as using them in her own work.